



# *Iowa Outdoors*

**Iowa Department of Natural Resources**  
**[www.iowadnr.com](http://www.iowadnr.com)**

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**Jan. 9, 2007**

1. Safe Hunting Year Record – by Joe Wilkinson (Hold until Jan. 11)
2. Trout Stocking on Hold, For Now
3. DNR Considers Habitat/Hunter Access Program on Private Lands
4. Opportunity for Wildlife Watchers to Help DNR
5. Refund for Wildlife
6. 2006 Hunting, Fishing Licenses Expire Jan. 10
7. New Site Index to Simplify DNR Website

(Hold until Jan. 11)

## **SAFE HUNTING YEAR RECORD**

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

For Iowa hunters, 2006 is one for the books. With no deaths and 14 injuries, last year goes down as the safest hunting year on record.

There were also no deaths--but 17 injuries—in 2004, the previous low year. With a single fatality in 2005, safety officials in the Department of Natural Resources point to a couple major factors for the improved outlook. “Upland bird hunters are now required to wear blaze orange,” notes Rod Slings, DNR safety education coordinator. “We also have 1,800 volunteer instructors who instruct about 12,000 students in hunter education each year.”

Hunter education in Iowa has been mandatory since the 1960s; a decade in which it had become common for deaths related to hunting to number in the double digits, with a high of 20 in 1965. Injuries from hunting incidents would range in the 70s, 80s and 90s...with a peak of 121 in 1966. Though safety officials still point out that any death or injury is too many, the trend has dropped dramatically since then.

“We have more people taking hunter education; more adults getting into classes, too,” notes DNR recreational safety officer Ken Kenyon. “They are taking them with their children. They might take them to go to other states to hunt. Additionally, we have

an entire hunting generation that has grown up with hunter education. Youths who took hunter education 25 or 30 years ago now have kids of their own taking it.”

Those classes cover proper handling of firearms, as well as basic wildlife behavior and identification, outdoor ethics, first aid and other topics. Classes are free, and conducted by volunteer instructors. Many offer instruction in the field, including live firing. Successful completion of the ten-hour course is required for anyone born after 1966 to purchase an Iowa hunting license. Iowa has reciprocal agreements with other states and Canadian provinces. “Instructors make sure students understand how hunting incidents happen, what factors contribute to them and how to avoid them,” stresses Kenyon. “Those students are aware of that when they go out in the field. It is something they carry with them for a long time.”

Perhaps the most visible hunting incident of 2006 brought more about awareness. “After the February shooting incident involving Vice President Dick Cheney, hunter education instructors had a visible opportunity to stress that it *could* happen to anyone,” emphasizes Slings.

In 2006 in Iowa, most injuries were self-inflicted, due to careless handling of firearms. Most injuries were to the head or upper torso. Even as hunters and safety officials look back on a record year, though, a gunshot injury in southeast Iowa in the first days of January brings them back to the reality that safety is year-to-year goal.

Another leading cause of hunting incidents occurs as a hunter swings on game, and loses track of the position of a fellow hunter. The relatively new (since 2003) requirement for upland bird hunters to wear at least one article of clothing which is at least 50 percent blaze orange has helped improve hunter visibility, contributing to the downturn in injuries and deaths, say safety officials. “DNR officers are also trained in hunting incident investigation, uncovering facts which provide curriculum focus in the hunter education classroom,” says Slings.

The record safe hunting year came in a period in which 255,190 persons bought small game, fur harvester, hunting preserve or lifetime licenses in Iowa. In addition, about 47,000 landowners and tenants received reduced price deer or turkey tags. Those residents do not need the small game license to hunt on their property. Iowa’s boom in deer hunting sold 385,543 deer tags in 2006 (through January 3, 2007). While many hunters held multiple tags, it underscores the number of opportunities in the field, and the potential for injury in a year in which hunters set a safety record.

## **TROUT STOCKING ON HOLD, FOR NOW**

LEWIS – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is postponing its Jan. 12 trout stocking at Big Lake and Lake Saganush in Council Bluffs due to questionable ice conditions.

“As of now, we are still going to try to get the stocking in, if the weather cooperates,” said Chris Larson, regional fisheries supervisor with the DNR. Cold temperatures are forecasted for the area beginning Friday on through Jan. 17. “We are going to wait until the following week to determine if it can take place.”

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## **DNR CONSIDERS HABITAT/HUNTER ACCESS PROGRAM ON PRIVATE LANDS**

BOONE - The Wildlife Bureau of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is working to determine if Iowa landowners would be interested in a Habitat Access Program and if local conservation groups, such as county conservation boards or soil and water conservation districts, could deliver the program.

Todd Bogenschutz, upland game biologist for the DNR, noted that many state wildlife agencies, particularly those west of Iowa, have initiated similar programs on private lands.

“Some states simply lease hunting rights from landowners, while others pay for habitat improvements on private land and in exchange for this work landowners sign agreements to allow public access to their lands,” Bogenschutz said.

The Iowa DNR prefers the habitat approach used by some states as it keeps with its mission to conserve and enhance our natural resources, Bogenschutz said. The DNR issued a formal request for information (RFI) on January 5.

There are numerous benefits to private landowners from enrolling in a habitat access program including:

- Habitat improvements increase wildlife populations on the property.
- Habitat improvements increase property value.
- Landowners enrolling in the program would be freed from dealing with requests for access.
- Only foot traffic is allowed on enrolled lands.
- Landowners enrolled in a DNR sponsored program would be protected from liability concerns under state law. Landowners who privately lease land for a fee are not protected under state law.
- DNR law enforcement staff would patrol enrolled properties.

If landowner and vendor response to this RFI is favorable and economically feasible the department will likely pursue implementing a program with a Request for Proposals later this spring. To obtain a copy of this RFI visit the Iowa DNR website at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/rfp.html> and download the RFI as an Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) file.

**For more information, contact Bogenschutz at 515-432-2823.**

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## **OPPORTUNITY FOR WILDLIFE WATCHERS TO HELP DNR**

Become a citizen scientist and help the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) collect data on frogs, toads, raptors, herons or egrets. The Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Program (VWMP) is a six-hour training designed to prepare folks for collecting and submitting data on Iowa's declining wildlife to the wildlife diversity program. These data are crucial to the DNR's ability to monitor declining populations of frogs, toads, nesting raptors, and colonial waterbirds. Six training workshops have been scheduled across Iowa.

Three frog and toad survey workshops will instruct people in identifying frog and toad species by sight and sound, locating appropriate survey sites, and collecting and submitting data. It is as easy as taking a drive on a few summer nights. Frog and Toad workshops are scheduled in Oskaloosa, Atlantic and Mason City.

Participants in the three bird nest monitoring workshops will learn how to identify raptors and colonial waterbirds (herons, egrets) and locate and monitor their nesting sites. Surveyors will visit nests two to three times during the spring and summer and collect data on the number of young successfully fledged. Bird nest monitoring workshops are scheduled for Fort Dodge, Burlington and Dubuque.

Information presented at the trainings will appeal to adults with an enthusiasm for the outdoors and an interest in observing wildlife. Pre-registration is required with a small fee to cover lunch. Training sessions usually run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For information on registration and other details visit <http://www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/files/divvols.html> or contact Stephanie Shepherd at 515-432-2823 x102 or [stephanie.shepherd@dnr.state.ia.us](mailto:stephanie.shepherd@dnr.state.ia.us).

Bird Nest Monitoring:

### **February 24 - Burlington**

Des Moines County Conservation Board, Starr's Cave Nature Center  
10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Lunch provided)  
FEE: \$7

### **March 24 - Dubuque**

Dubuque County Conservation Board, Swiss Valley Nature Center, Peosta  
10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Lunch provided)  
FEE: \$7

**March 31 - Fort Dodge**

Webster County Conservation Board, Bob Heun Shelter House, John F. Kennedy Park  
10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Lunch provided)  
FEE: \$7

Frog and Toad Call Survey:

**February 17 - Oskaloosa**

Mahaska County Conservation Board, Russell Wildlife Area Conservation Center  
10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Lunch provided)  
FEE: \$6

**March 3 - Atlantic**

Atlantic Public Library, 507 Poplar St.  
10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Lunch Provided)  
**FEE: \$6**

**March 10 - Mason City**

Cerro Gordo County Conservation Board, Lime Creek Nature Center  
10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Lunch provided)  
FEE: \$5.50

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## **REFUND FOR WILDLIFE**

What do peregrine falcons, regal fritillary butterflies, spadefoot toads and bobcats all have in common? They are all wildlife species that benefit from contributions to the Fish and Wildlife Fund tax check-off (aka Chickadee Check-off) on line 59 of the Iowa State Income Tax form. Research and habitat management for game species such as deer, turkeys, waterfowl and pheasants are funded through license fees, and habitat stamps. Iowa's non-game wildlife relies mainly on the generosity of Iowa's citizens through the check-off.

The chickadee check-off has a relatively long history. Being introduced by the Iowa legislature in 1981, it was the first and only check-off until 2001. At its high point, more than 16,000 people donated each year raising approximately \$200,000. But over the last two years, the number of individuals donating and the amount contributed fell nearly 20 percent each year. In 2005, fewer than 10,000 people donated approximately \$117,000. This is despite the fact that a recent survey indicated that 45 percent of Iowa's

population over age 16 engage in wildlife watching activities. Iowa's many non-game species are benefiting from the generous contributions of a few.

Funds go directly to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Wildlife Diversity Program which is in charge of the 80 percent of Iowa's wildlife that is not hunted, fished or trapped. That is more than 500 species. The Wildlife Diversity Program uses the funds to host public events in local communities, like Bald Eagle Appreciation Days, Pelican Fest and Hawk Watch.

Contributions are used to fund research on Iowa's most imperiled wildlife such as red-shouldered hawks and ornate box turtles and to restore to Iowa long-gone species such as trumpeter swans, peregrine falcons and ospreys. The contributions are also used to develop and distribute several educational publications on Iowa's diverse wildlife and to guide the management of public and private lands for the benefit of both people and wildlife.

Investing in the future of Iowa's non-game wildlife is as easy as checking a box on your state tax form. Every cent of each donation is put to work for Iowa's non-game wildlife and the contribution is tax-deductible. Please consider contributing to the Fish/Wildlife Fund – it is one of most hassle-free ways to make a difference for wildlife. The check-offs are on line 59 of the Iowa State Income Tax form. For more information, contact the Wildlife Diversity Program at 515-432-2823.

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## **2006 HUNTING, FISHING LICENSES EXPIRE JAN. 10**

DES MOINES – The 2006 hunting and fishing licenses expire on Jan. 10. The price of a 2007 resident hunting license and fishing license is \$17.50 each. Licenses are available at more than 1,000 locations, and on the web at [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov).

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## **NEW SITE INDEX TO SIMPLIFY DNR WEBSITE**

DES MOINES – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has added an index tool to its website to allow visitors to browse topics alphabetically. The link to the index is on the left menu bar, second from the top.

The website, [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov), has information on programs ranging from abandoned wells to wastewater treatment operators, and from hunting and fishing

regulations to the state forest nursery. This new index is a way to help visitors to find what they need.

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